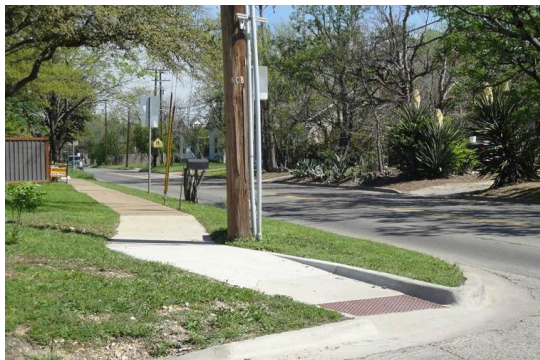




Pedestrian Mobility Plan



Updated May 2012



PEDESTRIAN MOBILITY PLAN
2012 UPDATE



...promote alternative modes of transportation such as walking, bicycling, and eventually, mass transit.

-Thoroughfare Plan

...the region should include a framework of transit, pedestrian, & bicycle systems that provide alternatives to the automobile.

...ordinary activities of daily living should occur within walking distance of most dwellings, allowing independence to those who do not drive.

-SmartCode

...strengthen the links and reinforce gateways & corridors between the surrounding neighborhoods and downtown.

...adequate sidewalks, crosswalks & transportation markings are necessary to provide linkages from one destination to another.

-Old Town Master Plan

Quality of Life Strategic Goal #3:
Pedestrian Mobility
and preservation of green space.

-2030 Strategic Guide

...a greenbelt serves as both a linear park and a transportation corridor.

81% of survey respondents said that if Hutto built safe pedestrian routes connecting neighborhoods schools, recreation & civic uses, they would use those instead of driving.

-Parks, Recreation, Open Space and Trails Master Plan

...create a highly connected transportation system to provide choices for pedestrians, bicyclists, public transit passengers, and drivers.

...connect neighborhoods to each other and to local destinations such as schools, parks, & shopping centers.

-Unified Development Code



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Introduction

The 2012 Pedestrian Mobility Plan updates build on the work of the 2010 Pedestrian Mobility Plan and the 2003 Pedestrian Mobility Study. The 2010 Plan identified areas in need of sidewalks and prioritized each project through a ranking system. As subdivisions fill in, and development occurs throughout the city, the disconnected sidewalk network slowly becomes more complete. The 2012 Plan revisits each previously-identified area to account for any notable changes that have taken place over the past two years.

While one project, the Enclave to School Connection, was addressed after the adoption of the Pedestrian Mobility Plan, the others have yet to be completed. These projects make up the bulk of the updated plan, but their reasons for selection may have shifted. For example, the opening of a new restaurant or food market near an existing neighborhood may trigger new interest in walking, as residents have a desirable destination nearby. Additionally, the popularity of local parks, such as Fritz and Hutto Lake Park, may indicate residents' interest in recreational trails that take advantage of Hutto's natural features.

Walkability is largely determined by the presence of well-placed, appropriately-designed sidewalks or paths. In Hutto, many children live within walking distance to their schools but are unable to walk due to a number of factors. These include high speed roads, vegetative or geographical barriers, or poor connectivity that creates a walk much further than the distance "as the crow flies". A 2012 parent survey done as part of the Safe Routes to School program showed that given the choice, over twenty-one percent of parents would prefer their children walk to school. However, due mostly to the absence of sidewalks and paths, only about five percent currently do. Over seventy-nine percent of respondents reported a sidewalk missing for all or part of their child's route to school. As projects are built in accordance with this plan, the city's overall walkability will gradually improve.



Background

Following the Pedestrian Mobility Study, city planning staff conducted an inventory of Hutto sidewalks in 2008. The product, the Existing Sidewalks Map, shows subdivisions and roadways currently without sidewalks in place. Prior to the adoption of the current development code, builders were not required to construct sidewalks in new subdivisions. This has left many streets in Hutto without a sufficient network of sidewalks. In the absence of a safe, comfortable environment, residents either walk in the street, or prefer not to walk at all. New subdivisions are now required to provide sidewalks on both sides of the street, and missing links throughout the city are gradually filled-in as development occurs. The Pedestrian Mobility Plan encourages the construction of sidewalks that not only facilitate, but promote and encourage walking for the purposes of recreation and transportation.

Current Sidewalk Inventory





Projects

Of the sixteen projects in the plan, one saw significant improvements resulting in increased pedestrian mobility, and has therefore been removed from the updated plan. A sidewalk connecting Enclave at Brushy Creek to Nadine Johnson Elementary and Hutto High School has made it safer and more pleasant for students to walk to school.

Several projects were also added to the plan as a part of the 2012 updates. The first addition is a project at Highway 79 and Jim Cage, aimed at creating a safe pedestrian route between North and South Old Town. The proposed improvements include a sidewalk from Front Street to Highway 79, over the railroad tracks, and crosswalks across Highway 79. The railroad and highway currently act as a barrier to non-vehicular traffic, deterring pedestrians and cyclists from trying to cross.

FM 685, another addition, provides a valuable link from Highway 79 to Gattis School Road and SH 130. While no sidewalks currently exist, funding from CAMPO will soon bring much-needed improvements to the thoroughfare. Upon project completion, FM 685 will provide enhanced access and mobility for all users, regardless of their mode of transportation. While the project is already underway, the current lack of sidewalks along this major roadway makes FM 685 worthy of mention in the 2012 Plan.

The third addition to the plan is the Live Oak/Emory Farms Avenue extension, identified in the city's Thoroughfare Plan as a vital connection between the future East Williamson County Higher Education Center and the heart of Hutto. As a link between two important nodes within Hutto, the new roadway should be designed with all users in mind, from drivers to cyclists and pedestrians.

Aside from the removal of the Enclave School Connection and addition of Highway 79, FM 685 and Live Oak/Emory Farms Extension, the 2012 Plan focuses on the same areas identified in 2010.

Each project falls into at least one of the following categories, as indicated by the icons on each page:



Project improves
CITY-WIDE CONNECTIVITY



Project is identified in
TRAILS MASTER PLAN



Project is a
POTENTIAL SCHOOL ROUTE



Project is identified in
SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PLAN

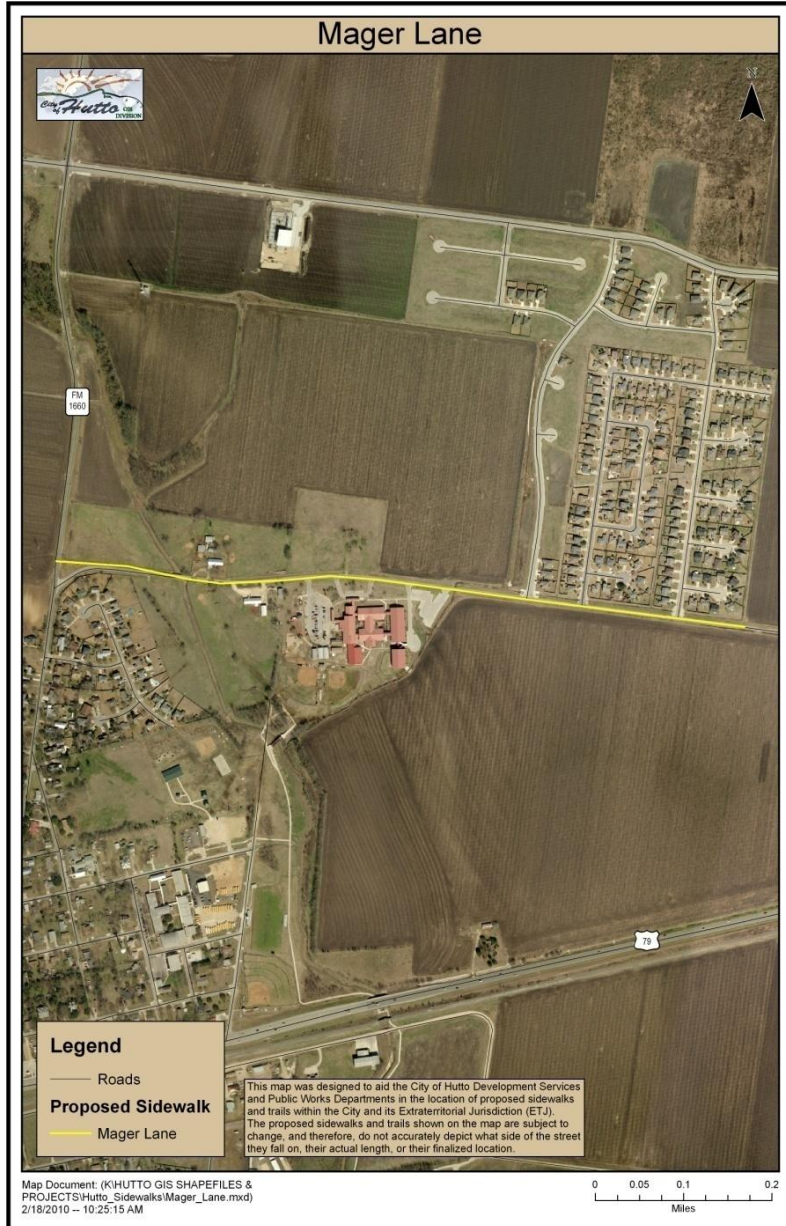
Safe Routes to School is a 100% federally-funded program committed to building sidewalks, bike lanes, and other provisions which enable children to walk or bike to school. Hutto has developed a Safe Routes to School Plan, identifying several areas of highest concern, as well as the desired solutions. Once adopted, the specific projects will be eligible for federal funding as it becomes available. For projects marked with the SRTS icon, refer to the adopted Safe Routes to School plan for detailed recommendations.



Hwy 79 at Jim Cage Ln.

Highway 79, Hutto's most prominent arterial roadway, brings thousands of vehicles through the city each day. However, the roadway's capacity for vehicular traffic does not bode well for pedestrians or cyclists. Those wishing to travel from one side of town to the other on foot currently must cross the railroad and five lanes of traffic without the assistance of a crosswalk or signal. Currently, the only pedestrian route is an underpass to the east, near FM 1660 South. The addition of these elements would provide another safe way for residents to cross Highway 79. A sidewalk across the railroad and crosswalks over Highway 79 would connect the proposed sidewalks in South Old Town to those proposed along FM 1660 North.





Mager Ln.



Mager Lane, identified in 2010 as the highest priority project in the Pedestrian Mobility Plan, was also recognized in the 2012 Safe Routes to School plan as a crucial route connecting nearby residents to Hutto Elementary. Despite a short distance of less than half a mile, walking from these neighborhoods to the school is dangerous and nearly impossible. Sidewalks along Mager Lane may also connect residents to nearby Fritz Park more easily. Mager Lane was identified in a citizen-approved bond as a critical project for roadway improvements that will include the construction of sidewalks.

The Mager Lane improvement project is currently in the design phase, and will continue through 2012. The project will include elements to address automobile congestion near the school, as well as a sidewalk connecting Hutto Elementary, Clarks Crossing, and Carol Meadows.





FM 1660 South

In the 2010 Pedestrian Mobility Plan, FM 1660 South ranked second-highest of all projects. Sidewalks were also approved in a 2009 bond election, but have not yet been constructed. As a major roadway adjacent to several large residential subdivisions, it serves as a school route to Ray Elementary and Farley Middle Schools. While only some of the residences fall under the Ray Elementary attendance zone, almost all middle-school students south of 79 attend Farley. To facilitate and promote safe walking or biking to school, the Safe Routes to School plan calls for wide sidewalks along the west side of FM 1660, hopefully resulting in a reduced speed limit or school zone designation. Future commercial and mixed-use development planned near CR 137 will also benefit from and contribute to increased pedestrian mobility.

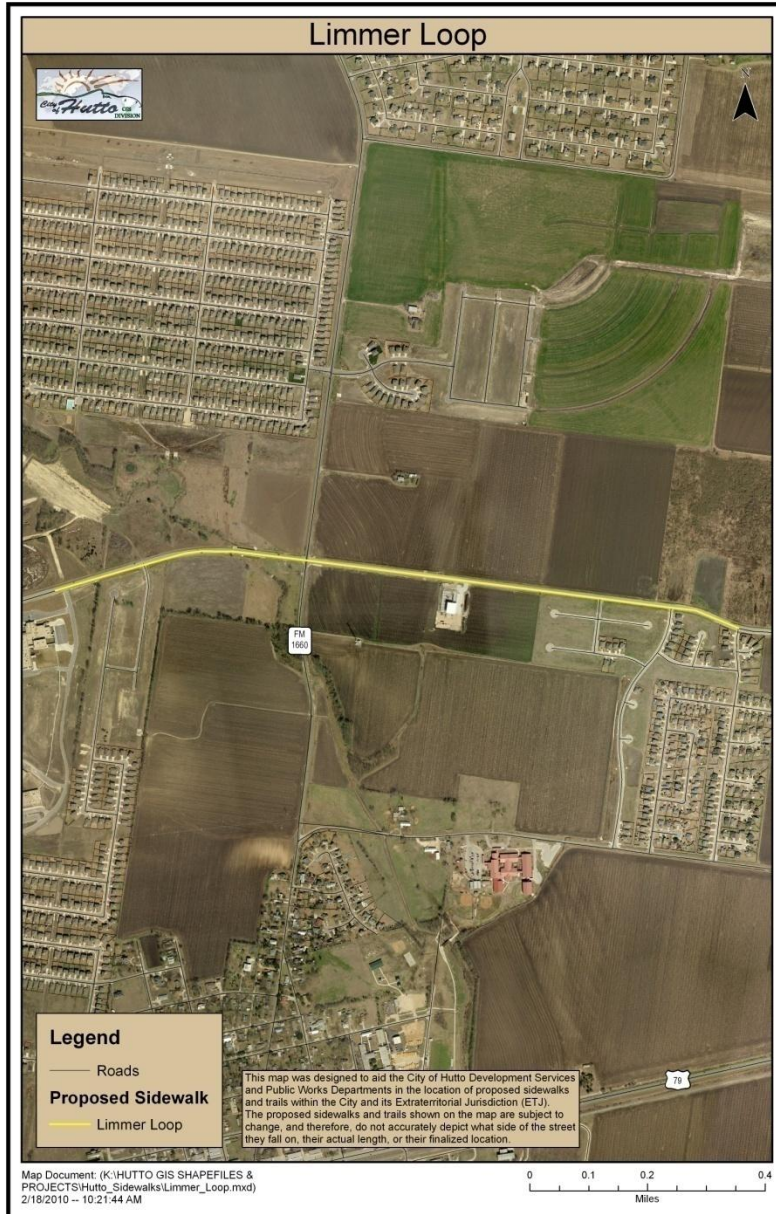


Limmer Loop



Limmer Loop, ranked third highest of all projects in 2010, is also one of the top projects listed in the 2012 Safe Routes to School plan. Already a major East-West arterial for the city, Limmer Loop is set to serve as a key thoroughfare to and from the East Williamson County Higher Education Center in the near future. Limmer Loop also connects several residential subdivisions to Cottonwood Creek Elementary and Hutto Middle School. Currently, many students live within walking distance of the schools but are unable to travel safely on foot or bike. Future commercial development will further increase the demand for pedestrian access to and from adjacent neighborhoods.

In conjunction with sidewalks on FM 1660 N and CR 119, which are both also recommended in the Pedestrian Mobility Plan, sidewalks along Limmer Loop will greatly contribute to city-wide pedestrian connectivity.





FM 1660 North

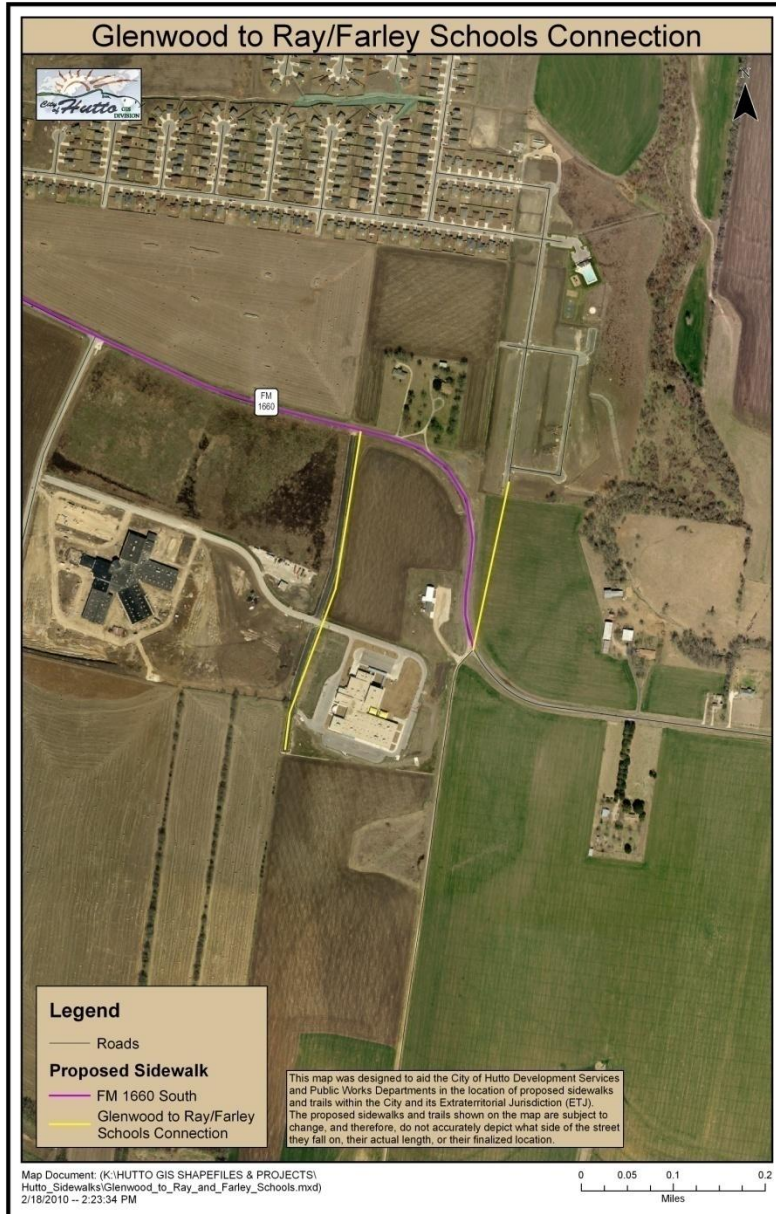
As one of the major North-South thoroughfares in Hutto, FM 1660 North connects Old Town to Mager Lane, Limmer Loop, and residential subdivisions HuttoParke and Hutto Highlands. Because of the road's central location, it has the potential to greatly increase city-wide pedestrian mobility with the addition of sidewalks. The recently-completed Farley Street improvements have set the stage for nearby roads to make similar streetscape enhancements and facilitate safe walking through Hutto. Additionally, the project will connect with the proposed crosswalks and sidewalks near Jim Cage to assist pedestrians crossing Highway 79 and the railroad.





Glenwood

Farley Middle and Ray Elementary are two more schools in Hutto where the proximity to residential subdivisions does not translate into walkability. Glenwood is of particular concern because of the volume of students living in the subdivision, and the 60 mph road that separates students from their school, only a half-mile away. While this plan already identifies the need for sidewalks along FM 1660 South, additional sidewalks should be constructed to connect the eastern portion of Glenwood to the schools. This would provide a safe alternative for those who may otherwise cut through an open field and cross the high-speed road, for the sake of shortening their walk. The Safe Routes to School plan identifies this project as a way to promote safe walking and reduce the demand for costly bus transportation.





FM 685

FM 685 is a high speed thoroughfare connecting Hutto to Gattis School Road and SH 130. Even in the absence of sidewalks or a safe pedestrian path, it often serves as a route for children walking to Hutto High School. The addition of sidewalks along 685 would facilitate and encourage students walking safely from nearby neighborhoods. The decreased dependence on parents to drop-off and pick-up students could also result in reduced traffic congestion at neighborhood entrances. Plans for the FM 685 improvements are currently underway, and include the addition of a landscaped median, turn lane, and sidewalks.

Image via Google Maps





Exchange Blvd.

While sidewalks line the streets of the Hutto Square subdivision, including a portion of Exchange Blvd., they fail to extend to nearby commercial development. The need for sidewalks along Exchange is apparent in the goat trails leading to Hanson's Corner, a commercial development on Highway 79. In addition to Hutto Square residents, future commercial and multi-family development in the area will also benefit from a more complete sidewalk system. Filling in the gaps along such a crucial road will contribute greatly to city-wide connectivity.





Metcalfe & Church Streets

Metcalfe Street serves as an important link through Old Town, passing from Hutto Square to Fritz Park. Church Street provides an additional North-South route just east of FM 1660 North. While both are key components in Old Town's historic street network, neither currently has sidewalks. Sidewalks would connect residents with many destinations in Old Town, and would also improve potential routes to schools.





Ed Schmidt Boulevard

Ed Schmidt Boulevard provides access to the Hanson's Corner and Townwest Commons retail centers, as well as the Emory Farms subdivision. As commercial development occurs, and the neighborhood continues to grow, residents may benefit from a safe route between the two. A sidewalk along Ed Schmidt may also provide pedestrian access to Limmer Loop, which is a potential school route to Cottonwood Creek Elementary, and to Highway 79.



Image via Google Maps





South Old Town

Walkability will be increasingly important throughout Old Town as new development occurs under the form-based SmartCode. A sidewalk along West Front Street accommodates pedestrians of all ages, who utilize the paths for recreation and travel alike. Additional sidewalks are needed throughout existing residential areas south of Highway 79, on streets like Austin Avenue, Jim Cage Lane, and Brushy Street. These sidewalks will provide additional connectivity through Old Town by foot, and will be connected to the North side of town with the addition of sidewalks and crosswalks around Highway 79 and Jim Cage.

Image via Google Maps





Lakeside Collector

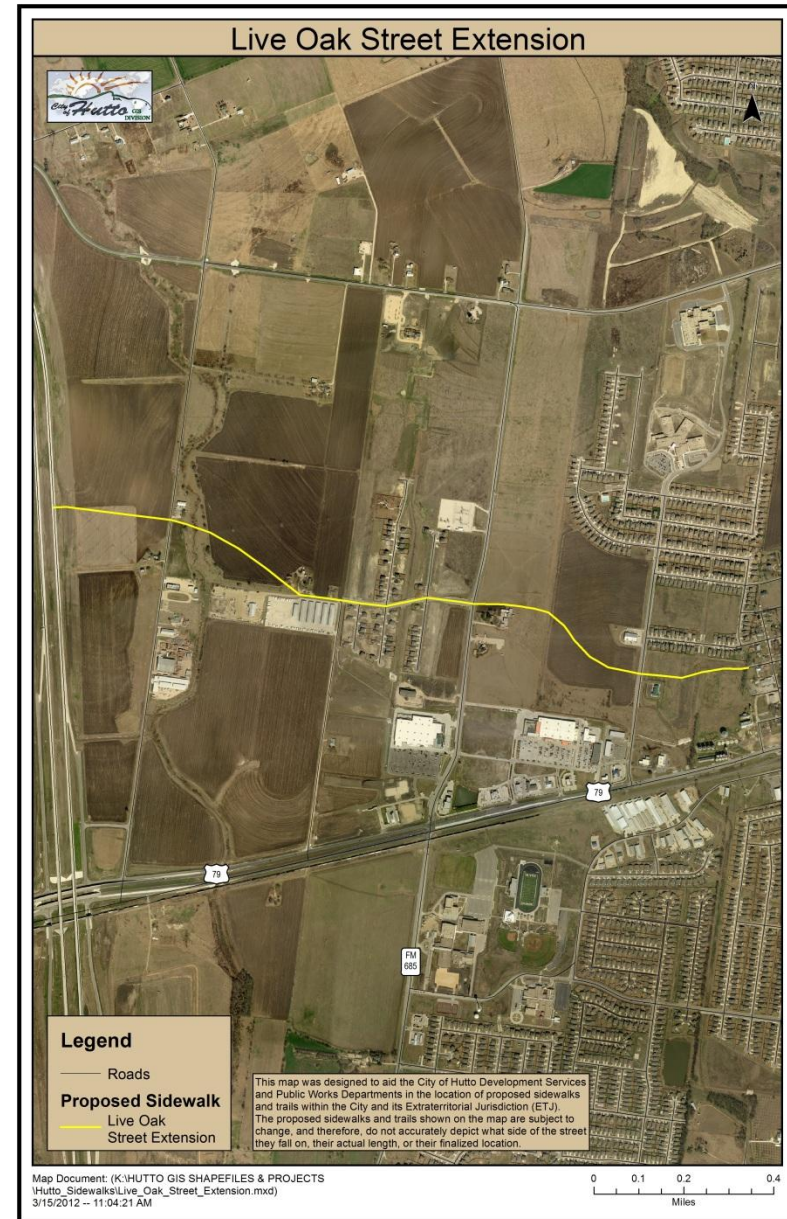
Lakeside Estates is home to Hutto Lake Park, an award-winning public park complete with playground, recreational facilities, and walking trails. However, there are no sidewalks connecting residents to this valuable amenity. Sidewalks along Estate Drive, the main collector roadway, would enable residents to walk to the park, as well as to a future school planned for the Riverwalk subdivision.





Live Oak/Emory Farms Extension

The westward extension of Live Oak Street is identified in Hutto's Thoroughfare Plan as a crucial connection between two important nodes. Currently a residential street in Old Town, Live Oak will soon intersect with Exchange Boulevard and continue on to Emory Farms Avenue. Eventually, the road will connect the future East Williamson County Higher Education Center to the historic heart of Hutto. For this reason, the new roadway should be designed with all users in mind, from drivers to cyclists and pedestrians.





Riverwalk Connection



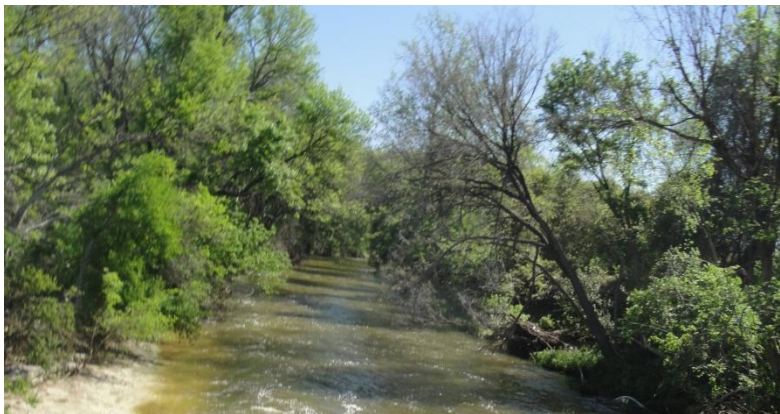
Currently, there is no paved pathway between Riverwalk and Enclave at Brushy Creek. Because the pavement does not continue north of the bridge, leaving users with only a muddy path, this potential school route is neither safe nor ADA-compliant. A sidewalk would connect residents of the adjacent neighborhoods, while also improving city-wide connectivity and providing pedestrians a north-south alternative to the high-speed FM 685.

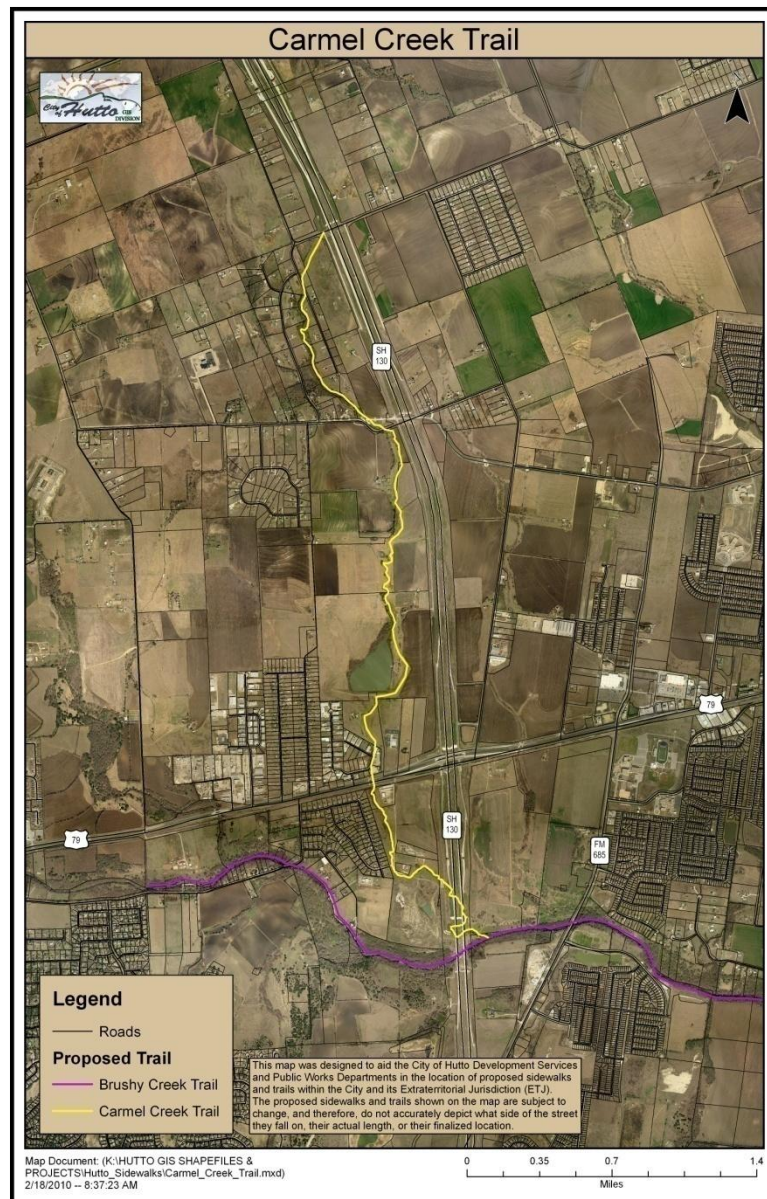




Brushy Creek Trail

Brushy Creek runs east-west along the Southern city boundary. A trail along the scenic creek would contribute to pedestrian mobility in Hutto, as well as on a regional scale. It could also provide health benefits to residents by creating new recreational opportunities. The Brushy Creek Trail is part of the city's Trails Master Plan.

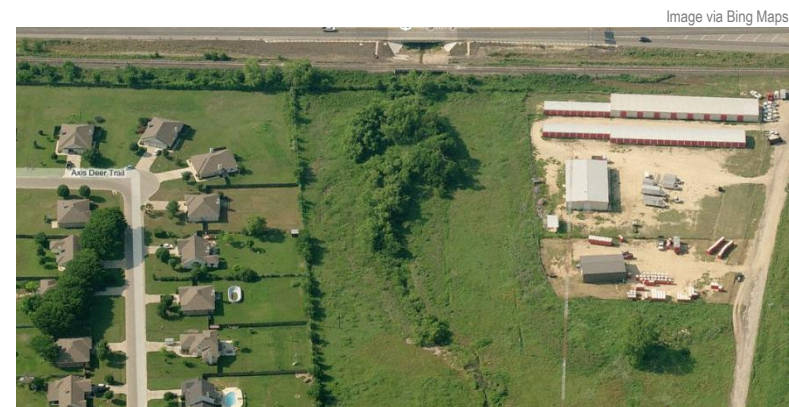




Carmel Creek Trail



Carmel Creek runs somewhat parallel to SH-130, adjacent to existing residential and industrial development. The creek converges with Brushy Creek Trail just south of Highway 79. Carmel Creek trail will be an important component of the future vertical mixed-use development, the Crossings of Carmel Creek, as well as to other future development along SH 130.





Cottonwood Trail Ph. 3

Phase 3 of the Cottonwood Trail, which is identified in the Trails Master Plan, runs along Cottonwood Creek north of Highway 79. A trail would provide a safe connection from the HuttoParke subdivision to the intersection of Mager Lane and FM 1660 North. From that point, residents can walk along Phase 2 of the Cottonwood Trail. Phase 2 runs south of Hutto Elementary, passing under Highway 79 and along the eastern boundaries of Creekside and Creek Bend subdivisions. The existing trail terminates near Carl Stern Drive, where wide sidewalks provide residents with east-west connectivity. Appendix A shows existing and future trails along with the proposed projects.



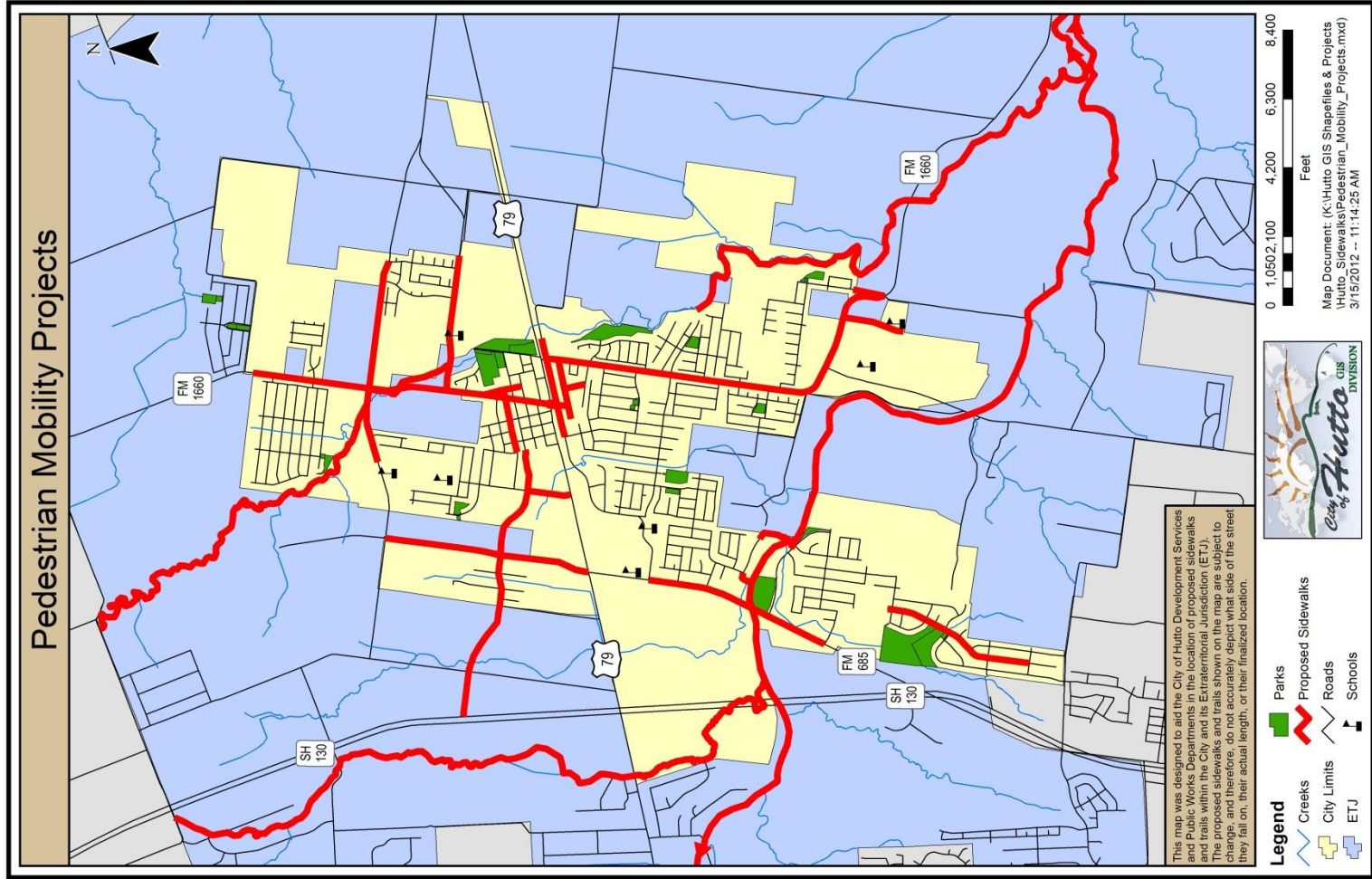


Cottonwood Trail Ph. 4

Phase 4 of the Cottonwood Trail will involve expansion of the trail south of Highway 79. Some significant improvements have already been made along the trail, including a pedestrian underpass and wide sidewalks along Carl Stern Drive. A map of existing and future trails follows in Appendix A. This portion of the Cottonwood Trail may serve as a recreational path for Hutto and regional residents, and serve as a key amenity in future development along Cottonwood Creek.



2012 Pedestrian Mobility Projects



Conclusion

Named one of the fastest-growing cities in the state, Hutto continues to attract new residents with its historic charm, unique natural features, and family-focused living. However, residential and commercial development over the last decade did not always include sidewalks. Subdivisions were not required to include sidewalks on both sides of all streets until the adoption of a subdivision ordinance several years ago. The result of this is an incomplete network that makes it difficult to walk safely through Hutto.



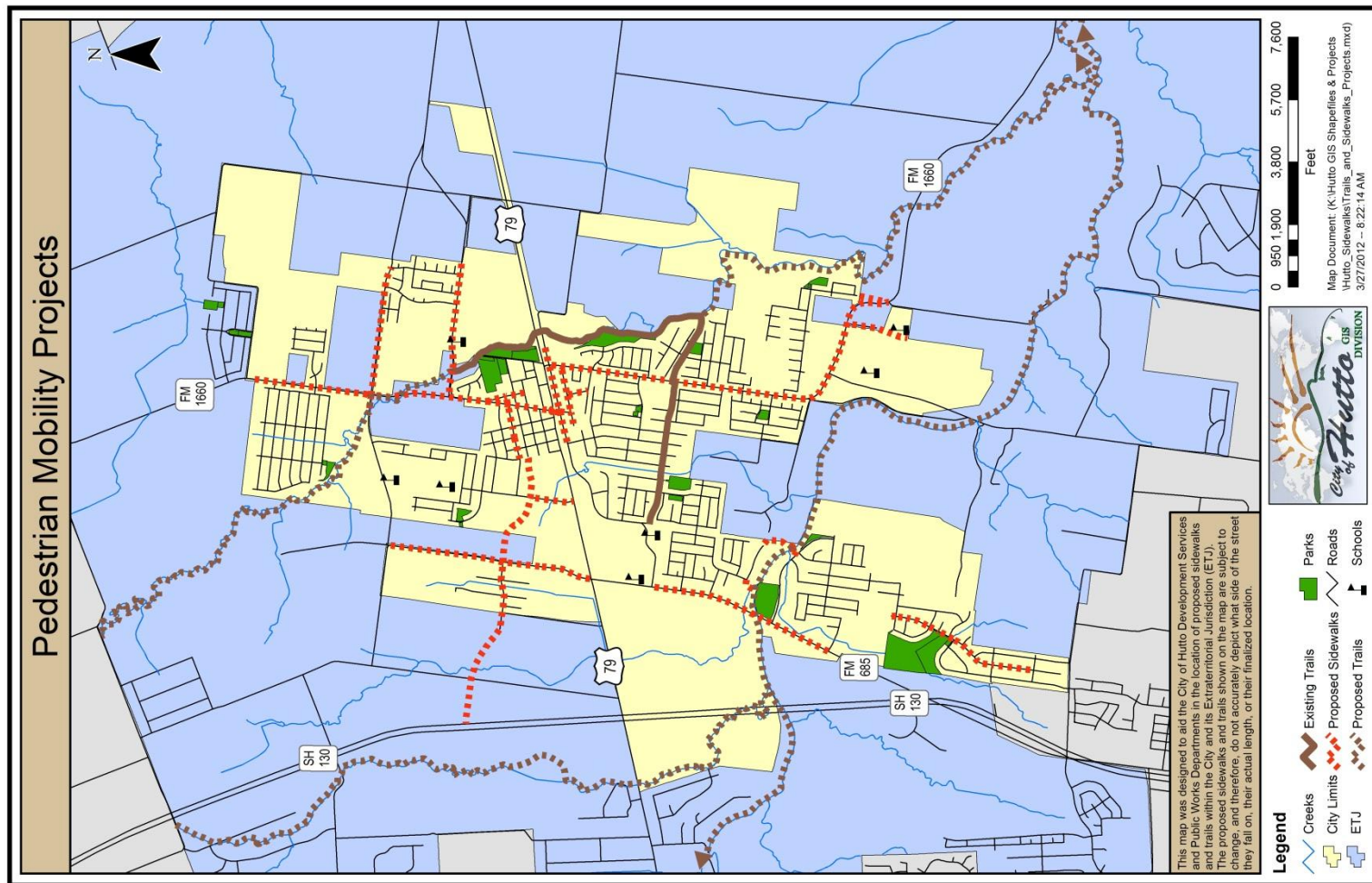
According to Transportation for America, the Austin-Round Rock area is one of the top 20 most dangerous in the country for pedestrians.¹ Hutto's relatively low number of pedestrian fatalities is likely attributed to the low number of pedestrians. The projects in the updated Pedestrian Mobility Plan aim to increase the city's walkability by adding sidewalks to existing roadways and improving walking conditions along the most heavily-traveled routes. The plan echoes the Trails Master Plan in proposing that the city develop particular trails, utilizing the natural beauty and connectivity of Hutto's creeks. The updates also happen to coincide with the creation of the city's Safe Routes to School plan, which identifies obstacles that prevent children from walking safely to and from school. Several projects appear in both plans in an effort to ensure timely completion.

Given the size of Hutto's city limits and existing pedestrian facilities, a functional city-wide sidewalk network is certainly achievable. Improvements to pedestrian connectivity benefit all residents, from those taking a leisurely jog to those choosing to walk to their destination. In addition to the numerous health and environmental benefits of walking, improvements in school routes can reduce congestion near schools by decreasing the number of students who have to be transported by car. Enabling more students to safely walk to school can also reduce pressure on the school district's bus system, which has recently been impacted by significant budget cuts. The intent of the Pedestrian Mobility Plan is to accomplish goals stated in previously-adopted documents, including Hutto's 2030 Strategic Plan, Old Town Master Plan, SmartCode, Unified Development Code, and Thoroughfare Plan, among others.

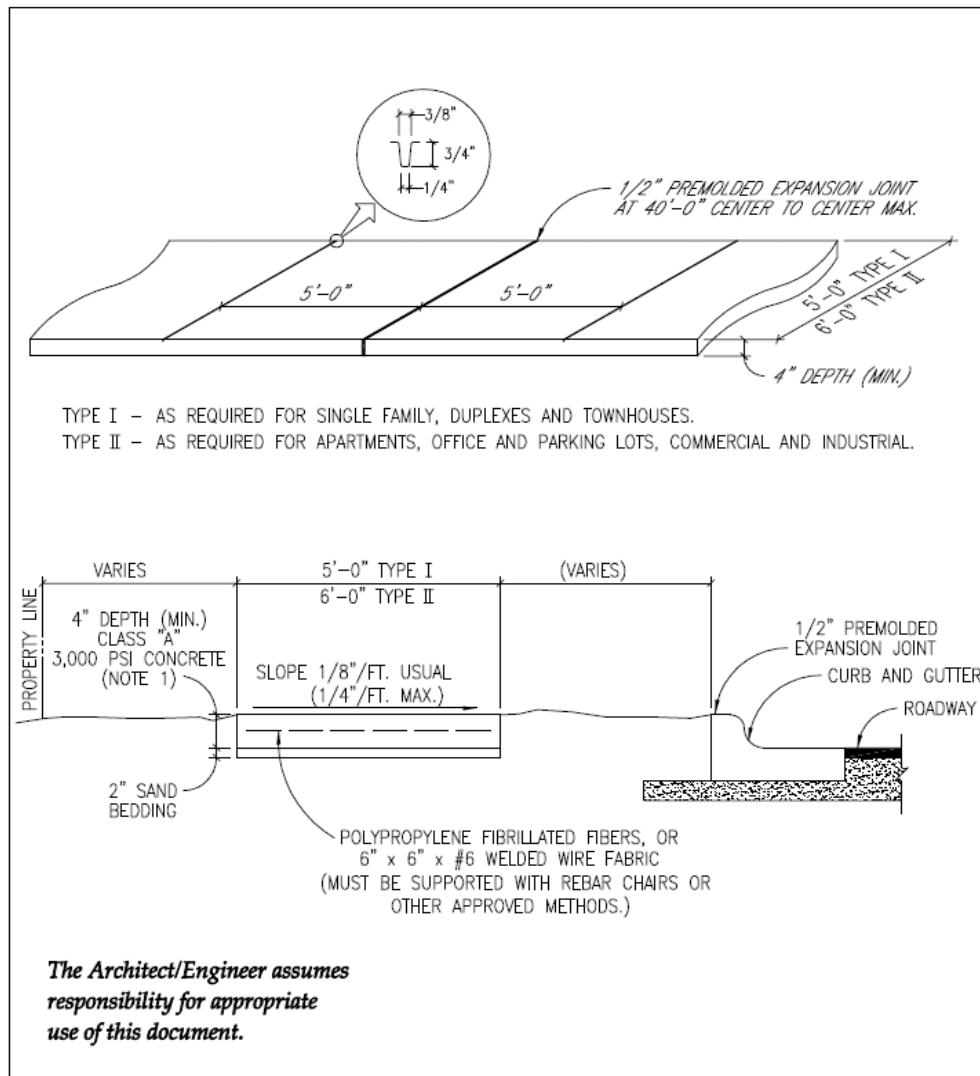
In the 2012 City-wide survey, *A Window to the Future*, pedestrian mobility had the second-to-lowest level of satisfaction of all city services. Only about one-quarter of residents report being satisfied or very satisfied with pedestrian mobility in the City. However, many subdivisions have been built with sufficient sidewalks and crosswalks. As development continues in Hutto, gaps will be filled and connectivity will steadily improve. The Pedestrian Mobility Plan shall provide guidance to city staff, council members, and commissioners to ensure that through completion of the aforementioned projects, walking in Hutto is practical, safe, and enjoyable.

1: Transportation for America: <http://t4america.org/resources/dangerousbydesign2011/states/worst-metros/>

Appendix A – Existing & Future Trails and Pedestrian Mobility Projects



Appendix B – Sidewalk Detail



Appendix C – Safe Routes to School: 2012 Parent Survey

As a part of the Safe Routes to School plan, BSP Engineering distributed an online survey to parents of Hutto Elementary, Nadine Johnson Elementary, Cottonwood Creek Elementary, Ray Elementary, Farley Middle School, and Hutto Middle School students. Results from over 300 survey respondents are shown in the charts below. The survey showed that most students do not have a safe walking path for their entire trip. The charts also illustrate a disconnection between the way children currently travel to school and the transportation mode preferred by parents.

Survey conducted by
BSP engineers
Beach Sulak Partners

